

Catalonia wants to toughen mask-wearing rules

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Regional officials in Catalonia said Tuesday they want to toughen the existing rules to make wearing masks compulsory in public, to stem a rising number of coronavirus cases.

On Saturday, 200,000 people in a zone around Lerida, west of Barcelona, were placed under lockdown as more than 1,000 cases of COVID-19 had emerged there since early June.

In the latest 24-hour period, 64 new cases were detected, regional data showed.

Masks are already compulsory in Spain when people cannot avoid being closer than 1.5 metres (yards)—on [public transport](#), for example.

"We want to make wearing masks obligatory at all times," regional government spokeswoman Meritxell Budo said by way of clarification.

"We have noticed some easing up in the use of [masks](#)" so a tighter measure might be called for, she explained.

Details of the measure must still be approved during a regional government meeting Wednesday.

Chief Spanish epidemiologist Fernando Simon said Monday he was "very concerned" by the outbreak in Catalonia.

Another 70,000 people are being isolated in Galicia, northwestern Spain, meanwhile.

With more than 28,300 deaths from the virus, Spain is one of the countries hit hardest in Europe.

From mid-March until June 21 Spaniards were subjected to one of the strictest lockdown regimes on the continent.

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